

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 OMB-01 IO-13 /097 W
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R 010901Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1446
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

S E C R E T RABAT 1754

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINT MO MR SS
SUBJECT: MOROCCAN-MAURTANIAN CONSULTATIONS

1. THE EXCHANGE OF TWO HIGH LEVEL DELEGATIONS BETWEEN MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA IN RECENT DAYS SUGGESTS THAT PLANNING IS UNDERWAY FOR NEW STEPS TO COPE WITH ONGOING POLISARIO ACTIVITY. ROYAL CABINET DIRECTOR AHMED BENSOU DA VISITED NOUAKCHOTT MARCH 22-23 ACCOMPANIED BY SEVERAL SENIOR MOROCCAN MILITARY OFFICERS. SHORTLY AFTER, A MAURITANIAN DELEGATION HEADED BY MINISTER OF INTERNAL SOVEREIGNTY, MOHAMED AHMED SALAH, AND INCLUDING THE MINDEF AND ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, ARRIVED IN MARRAKECH AND MET WITH KING HASSAN MARCH 28.

2. DATT HAS REPORTED THAT THE BENSOU DA MISSION EXAMINED MAURITANIAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT NEEDS AT THE REQUEST OF THE SAUDI MININT. PRINCE NAIF IBN ABDELAZIZ, WHO WAS ALSO IN MAURITANIA TO APPROVE FUNDING NEW ACQUISITIONS. THE PRINCE SUBSEQUENTLY VISITED MOROCCO. THE GOM IS ALSO REPORTEDLY
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PROVIDING MAURITANIA WITH SOME WEAPONS AND MILITARY VEHICLES. THE TERMS OF THIS TRANSFER ARE UNKNOWN.

3. THE GIRM MINISTERIAL VISIT HERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY LINKED TO THE BENSOU DA VISIT. SPECULATION IS THAT AT THE VERY LEAST PLANS ARE BEING MADE FOR MORE JOINT OPERATIONS AND CLOSER COORDINATION ON THE GROUND.

4. MARCH 31 OPPOSITION L'OPINION ARTICLE SPOKE OF A "SUDDEN DETERIORATION" OF THE MILITARY SITUATION IN MAURITANIA, FOLLOWING THE ARRIVAL IN THE NOUADHIBOU-DAKHLA-TICHLA TRIANGLE OF "SEVERAL MOTORIZED COLUMNS" COMING FROM TINDOUF. SUSPECTING AN ATTACK "ON THE MAGNITUDE OF THE JUNE 1976 ATTACK ON NOUAKCHOTT," THE GOM AND GIRM FORMULATED AN "URGENT PLAN" TO COUNTER THE ATTACK BY A BLOCKING ACTION IN THE AIN-BENTILI-BIR MOGHREIN REGION. THIS JOINT OPERATION IS SAID TO HAVE SUCCEEDED MARCH 23-24 IN DESTROYING "MOST" OF THE COLUMN AND IN CHASING THE REMAINING TO "ALGERIAN BASES" IN NORTHERN MALI. "SECURITY MEASURES" IN NW MAURITANIA WOULD "HENCEFORTH" BE STRENGTHENED, HAVING "PERMANENT MOBILITY" CAPABILITY. THE ARTICLE CITED "SOURCES" IN MARRAKECH (WHERE THE KING IS STAYING) AS WARNING THAT THE GOM AND GIRM WOULD NOT TOLERATE THOSE INCURSIONS FOREVER.

5. COMMENT: THERE APPEARS TO BE REAL CONCERN OVER REPORTS THAT THE MILITARY SITUATION IN MAURITANIA IS WORSENING. ONE CAN EXPECT THAT THE GOM WILL CONTINUE TO BE AS FORTHCOMING AS POSSIBLE TO GIRM REQUESTS.
MOFFAT

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